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**Fire Station 43 on track, temporary station not cooperating**



FS 43 days before paving completed

Photo Nick Marnell

**By Nick Marnell**

It wouldn't be the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Station 43 project without some degree of drama, but this episode has nothing to do with the new building; its construction has proceeded swimmingly through the rainy winter. The adjacent temporary structure, though, was closed down for an environmental review and an industrial cleaning after more than a dozen Station 43 personnel took sick in December and January.

Purchased in July 2016 for \$3,000 from the Carmel Fire Department, the temporary station was expected to house firefighters for at most 18 months, but those plans went out the window after two Station 43 contractors did not work out. (The principals of the second contractor, Federal Solutions Group of San Ramon, were charged in November with conspiracy, money laundering and insurance fraud by the Contra Costa County district attorney.)

An early sign of trouble with the temporary structure occurred in 2018 when work was done to repair floors that were "spongy," according to Capt. Mark McCullah, MOFD firefighters union representative. From late December into January, according to district records, 13 Station 43 personnel got sick, sick enough that the district recorded eight days of leave.

Fire Chief Dave Winnacker closed the station on Jan. 29. "The number of people who got sick motivated us to close it down," Winnacker said. Crews were reassigned to Fire Station 45 in Orinda Village, which according to Google Maps lies 2.5 miles from Station 43. Records supplied by the district show that Engine 43 responded to 78 calls out of Station 45 between Jan. 29 and Feb. 14, with 10 of the calls in Station 43's first due area.

The temporary station, actually a mobile home, underwent testing for contaminants Feb. 6 by EMLab P&K, and results came back negative. Central Valley Environmental began a major, industrial-type cleanup the following week, with project manager Braydon Stout confirming that no mold, lead or asbestos had to be removed from the structure. The temporary station was scheduled to be reoccupied the week of Feb. 18.

"The chief took all the necessary steps to bring the station to safe, working order," McCullah said.

New Fire Station 43 experienced no major issues through the early winter, just a few minor complications mostly attributed to the rain. "Everything has been addressed," Winnacker said, as the rebuilt station progresses toward its April grand opening.

**Packed opening night For the Love of Art**

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The crowd was also treated to a performance by local singer/songwriter Laura Zucker and to an Art Moves Project performance that included an interpretative dancer moving amongst them and an installation room titled "Encased." AMP is a public art initiative founded by Lafayette residents Yukie Fujimoto, Christy Mack and Lissa Resnick focused on bringing art and movement out of traditional venues to unexpected spaces.

"The dancer added a layer

and made it just so cool," says Perlmutter, explaining that she aims to push up against the norm. "The question is, what is art? Why does it matter?"

"For the last five years I've been bridging culture, commerce and community in my flagship gallery. People here are thirsty for art and creative connection," says Perlmutter. "Now even more people get to experience the strong creative culture in Contra Costa County. It's nothing short of exciting."

The gallery is open to the public 11 a.m. till 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays.

**Fire Station 16 on track, oak tree cooperating**



Fire Station 16 about two months away

Photo courtesy ConFire

**By Nick Marnell**

The construction-unfriendly weather has only minimally impacted the projected opening date for Lafayette Fire Station 16, scheduled to be completed and occupied early this spring.

"If you want to break a drought, build a fire station," Fire Chief Jeff Carman told his Contra Costa County Fire Protection District board of directors Feb. 12. The roof has been placed on the building and the framing is complete, and though mud up to three feet high sloshed around parts of

the building site during the heavy rains of January and February, ConFire Assistant Chief Aaron McAlister assured residents and future occupants that the building is water-tight.

The HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems have been roughed in, but Carman said it's been a bit slow securing utility services. Next up is the finishing of the windows and exterior surfaces. Sheetrock is expected to arrive late in February, and McAlister said that the stucco work will begin shortly afterward.

Work on the interior finish will follow, and the last items

on the checklist include paving and landscaping. "The building should be substantially complete by late March and potentially occupied in April," Carman said. McAlister confirmed that the heritage oak tree in front of the station has not caused any problems, and it appears that the building and tree will coexist peacefully.

Twenty-four recruits graduated from the district's Academy 52 on Feb. 14, and these new firefighters will allow ConFire to place Engine 16 into service and fully staff Fire Station 16.

**Early Morning Robbery at Moraga Center CVS**

**By Vera Kochan**

It was a quiet Presidents Day holiday Feb. 18 in the Moraga Center until 6:59 a.m. when a screeching of tires followed by a store alarm signaled a break-in at the CVS Pharmacy located at 1480 Moraga Rd.

A witness spotted a truck pull open one of the phar-

macy doors with a chain attached to the door handle.

According to Moraga Police Department Lt. Brian South, "The truck was stolen in Moraga. The multiple suspects were trying to steal the ATM machine inside. They were unsuccessful, but the machine suffered damage." CVS had no monetary loss,

however it is unclear whether anything else was taken at this time.

South confirmed, "The stolen vehicle was recovered on Sanders Drive. We are currently going through video surveillance and traffic cam footage to collect more information."



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